

**Governor's Council on Disability  
Quarterly Council Meeting Minutes  
May 1, 2026**

**Council Members Present/Participating:**

Steve Ahrens, Chuck Comstock, Wayne Crawford, Betty Davidson, Aaron Durso, Stacey Elster, Ron Hack (Chair), Katie Jones, Jennifer Meyer, Susan Orton, Andrew Sartorius, Lesia Shelton

**Council Members Absent/Not Participating:**

Elijah Mayfield, Jason Schott, Bob Wallace

**Staff:**

Claudia Browner, Reece Ellis, Laura Mueth, Jenn Pettit

**Department Liaisons Present/Participating:**

Aly Bacon – Attorney General's Office (AGO)

Kim Buckman – Department of Mental Health (DMH/DD)

Courtney Bullard – Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC)

Greg Caine – Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE/MSSD)

Sara Cleaveland – Vocational Rehabilitation (DESE/VR)

Raylene Douglas – Department of Corrections (DOC)

Tammy Meyer – Office of State Court Administrator (OSCA)

Joshua Shewmaker – Department of Revenue (DOR)

Kicia Vanzandt – Department of Social Services (DSS/FSD)

Robert Vaughn – Department of Higher Education & Workforce Dev (DHEWD)

Venice Wood – Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS)

**Call to Order/Introductions:**

Council Chair Ron Hack called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. Roll call was taken. There was a quorum for the meeting with 12 Council members in attendance. The meeting was held in person and by WebEx. Introductions followed.

- He emphasized the Council's strategy for the quarter, focusing on inter-agency collaboration and the protection of disability rights. Chair Hack introduced new state liaisons Scott Ballard, Lucinda Bishop, and Tammy Meyer.
- **Approval of Agenda:** The May 1, 2026, agenda was unanimously approved following a motion by Andrew Sartorius and a second by Betty Davidson.
- **Approval of Meeting Minutes:** The minutes of the February 20, 2026, meeting was unanimously approved without changes following a motion by Chuck Comstock and a second by Sue Orton.

**Public Comment:**

The Chair invited statements from the public; however, no members of the public requested to address the Council.

**Report from Council Chair – Ron Hack:**

Chair Hack reported that the state budget remains in conference. He noted a legislative proposal to eliminate state income tax in favor of an increased sales tax, likely appearing on the August or

November ballot. He reaffirmed the GCD's neutral, educational posture regarding specific legislation to maintain statutory credibility.

#### **Report from GCD Team:**

Council members received the full team report prior to the meeting. Highlights included:

##### **Claudia Browner**

- **Budget:** GCD has expended or encumbered \$16,662 (66%) of the FY26 expenditure budget.
- **Model Employer Initiative:** Detailed a tiered training curriculum for state agencies on ADA and employment law, which is slated to be rolled out to state agencies in the next few months. She presented an update on the Model Employer Initiative to the HR CORE community on March 19.
- **Outreach:** Accepted an invitation to serve on the Great Plains ADA Center Regional Advisory Group.

##### **Laura Mueth**

- **Legislative Education Project (LEP):** Completed four webinar sessions with a total of 179 participants.
- **Disability Rights Legislative Day:** The February 25 event saw a record-breaking attendance of 1,200 people.
- **Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) Legislative Day:** Relocating the event entirely to the State Capitol, utilizing a House hearing room for the mock hearing to maximize student exposure.

##### **Reece Ellis**

- **Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF):** Received 31 applications and accepted 30 delegates for the July 14-18 forum. Daniel Van Sant from the Harkin Institute has been secured as the keynote speaker.
- **Outreach:** Conducted outreach to the "Ascend" program at Missouri State - West Plains to ensure geographic and neurodiverse representation.
- **Presentations:** Scheduled to present on MO-YLF at the Transition Training Institute (TTI) on June 24 to special education professionals and advocates.

##### **Jenn Pettit**

- **Annual Awards:** Announced the 2025 Inclusion Award winners as Ed Pupillo and Jessica Ratsch. Joyce Fenner is the honorable mention. Luke McKeon was named the Youth Leadership Award winner and Izabella Uccello is the honorable mention.
- **Community Engagement:** Participated in the Go-Blue Wellness Walk for Child Abuse Prevention month and assisted the Missouri State Recycling Program for Earth Day at the Capitol.
- **Digital Accessibility:** Attended the MO Web Accessibility Summit on April 29 to strengthen skills in implementing accessible web content.

#### **State Liaison Reports:**

- **Kim Buckman (DMH/DD):** Reported on a rate study for day habilitation and the expansion of a support worker certificate program.
- **Gregery Caine (DESE/MSSD):** Aiming to increase the four-year graduation rate for students with disabilities to 86% by 2029. Reported on the closure of state-operated schools and the recovery of Bootheel State School from tornado damage.
- **Joshua Shewmaker (DOR):** Provided an update on HB 1827, which extends disabled placard duration to eight years; the effective date is August 28, 2026.

- **Venice Wood (DHSS):** Confirmed the April 1 launch of Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) claims validation for HCBS providers.

#### **Presentation:**

##### **Mental Health in Rural Missouri – Dr. Angeline Stanislaus, Chief Medical Director, DMH**

- **Prevalence:** Approximately 30% to 50% of individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) have co-occurring psychiatric disorders, triple the rate of the neurotypical population.
- **Behavior as Language:** Emphasized that aggressive actions are often the primary means for non-verbal individuals to communicate pain or trauma.
- **Stabilization Initiatives:** Discussed the HARP unit at Fulton State Hospital, a 15-bed specialized inpatient unit, and home-based psychiatric stabilization services using nurse practitioners to reduce ER boarding.

**Old Business – None**

**New Business – None**

#### **Committee Reports:**

- **Education Committee (Betty Davidson):** Focused on transition services for youth aging out at 21 and distributing the GCD Resource Guide to teachers. Discussed a bill regarding Special School Districts and planned to invite Representative Christ to a future meeting.

#### **Member Reports:**

- Ron Hack announced an inclusive "Happy 250th America" celebration on June 13 in Sunset Hills.
- Claudia Browner shared information on behalf of Lesia Shelton on a NASA Downlink event, a Deaf Education Symposium on August 1 in Springfield, and a Job Olympics event on May 12 in Columbia.

#### **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 PM.

#### **Next Meeting:**

Friday, August 21, 2026, at 10:00 AM at the Missouri Behavior Health Council, 3450 W Edgewood Drive Jefferson City, MO.

Minutes by Jenn Pettit  
May 5, 2026

Approved by Council  
August 21, 2026